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CHRISTIAN COURIER
A Reformed Weekly

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PER/BX/9401/.C36 JAN 19 1997

53rd Year of Publication | January 16, 1998 | No. 2560 $1.07

Canadians help Mayans regain their dignity

GORDON LEGGE

At a reforestation project in Guatemala, Desiderio Martin Pablo examines seedlings.

Gordon Legge

TODOS SANTOS, Guatemala — Todos Santos is a sprawling municipality of adobe brick and cinder block homes perched on the edge of the clouds, high up in a remote area of the Guatemalan highlands, south of the Mexican border.

To get there, you leave the Pan American highway and drive for almost three hours along a tortuous, narrow strip of gravel that would make a forestry road seem like a super highway.

This was where a Canmore, Alberta, couple, Bev and Paul Carrick, first rode their motorcycle 20 years ago while working for an international development agency.

Ten years later, in 1987, they returned to Todos Santos after starting up their own agency, CAUSE Canada (Christian Aid for Under-assisted Societies Everywhere). "Maybe we can be strategic by filling a niche nobody else is filling," Bev Carrick remembers thinking. Ever since, they've been working in partnership with the Todos Santerians to improve living conditions in the area.

In November, about 75 representatives from across Todos Santos crammed into the CAUSE Canada staff house and gave enthusiastic approval to a new era of projects aimed at: caring for those most in need, its widows; cultivating a new generation of leadership; and attacking some of the social problems that have festered below the surface for generations.

The town of Todos Santos, at 8,200 feet above sea level, sits within a municipality of the same name, a collection of tiny villages strung along the steep slopes.

Modern life spreading

In some ways, life hasn't change much for centuries. Men and women head out to pick coffee and cultivate corn, beans and chili coyote (a type of squash). Children tend sheep while old men slowly wind their way up the mountainsides, large bundles of wood bundled over their heads and backs. Average income is $300 a year.

But modern life is slowly encroaching on this community of 20,000 which is comprised mainly of indigenous Mayans famed for the brightly woven red blouses and shirts they wear.

Ten years ago, virtually all the homes were constructed of adobe brick and had thatched straw roofs. Five years ago, many of the woman spent hours daily trudging down into the valley to the muddy river to fetch water and wash clothes. Two years ago, you couldn't find an electric light in Todos Santos. There is still no telephone service.

Today many of the homes are constructed of cinder blocks and have corrugated tin roofs; many women have water piped to a large concrete basin adjacent to their homes; and more and more homes are sporting a single electric light bulb.

After centuries of subsistence living filled with suffering, the people are beginning to dream, to make plans for the future. They now have their own development organization, *Institucion Mam de Desarrollo Integral* (IMDI). With CAUSE Canada serving as a consultant and resource agency, IMDI's board manages the development projects, from integrated health and water projects to women's programs. As a result, the Mayans are recovering their dignity.

When the Carricks returned with CAUSE in 1987, they began by establishing a medical clinic to combat the many communicable and infectious diseases rampant in the area; then came integrated water and health programs; next the

See **NO TURNING** *page 2...*

Christian groups want welfare reform partnership with U.S. government

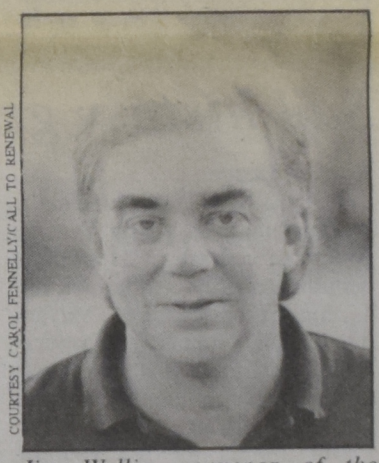
Alan Doerksen

HOLLAND, Mich — A coalition of Christian groups in the U.S. is urging the states' 50 governors to form partnerships with Christian agencies to find creative solutions to poverty. Some such partnerships already formed have brought dramatic results.

The Christian Roundtable on Poverty and Welfare Reform — a group representing a broad spectrum of Christians including Catholic, evangelical, mainline and some Reformed churches— issued a letter in December challenging America's governors to make use of recent welfare legislation that encourages governments to finance anti-poverty programs run by religiously based groups.

'Think outside the box'

"The 'charitable choice' provision of the legislation ... opens up new possibilities for church-government co-operation," the letter states. "We request a meeting between you, the appropriate members of your staff, religious leaders from your state, and members of the national roundtable. We would like to discuss with you the opportunities to develop new and creative government-church partnerships, along with mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating them. We invite you to 'think outside the box' and partner with the religious community in new efforts to end poverty."



COURTESY CAROL FENNELLY/CALL TO RENEWAL

Jim Wallis, convenor of the Christian Roundtable on Poverty and Welfare Reform.

Faith not compromised

The letter was signed by 27 Christian leaders, including Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*

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News

No turning back in Todos Santos

GORDON LEGGE PHOTOS

CAUSE Canada's Guatemalan director Linda Baartse (l.) greets Patrona Perez, of Tojchok, a village in Todos Santos.

... continued from page 1

reforestation projects.

Before long they realized that there was a need to work with the women in the area to begin to meet some of their many needs, from advice on personal hygiene and medical care for their children to cooking lessons and empowerment exercises.

"I've just been amazed to see how competent they've become," says Linda Baartse, a Canadian woman from Sarnia who has been working as CAUSE's Guatemalan country director since 1991. In the beginning, the women neither spoke nor participated in the development programs. Today they are equal partners with the men. The women's self-confidence, faithfulness to the program and ability to learn from each other and solve problems have all increased, says Baartse.

New problems emerge

Now they're looking to the future by expanding their programs. Development, of course, is not without its problems. Some of the social ills common to North America, like alcoholism, are emerging.

For instance, during the annual fiesta, the day before All Souls Day, some go on a drinking spree that may last for days. Likewise, juvenile delinquency is on the rise.

"When I was growing up, I obeyed my father," says Francisco Perez Martin, vice-president of the men's group in the village of Checruz. "I let my child go to school," Martin says about his 18-year-old son. "Now he doesn't respect me. I have to be on him all the time."

Nevertheless, for people of Todos Santos there's no turning back, as neighboring municipalities, like San Juan Atitan (even poorer and more remote than Todos Santos) now sign on.

Part of the funding for the projects comes from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). That is matched by private Canadian donors. The rest, both money and labor, comes from local people.

The people of Todos Santos contribute more than the Canadians do, says Carrick. "It's a real partnership."

From his side, Desiderio Martin Pablo, director of IMDI, concurs. "We thank God these people remember they have brothers outside their country. When the Spanish came, they came to conquer. When the Canadians come, they come to work and to help. This is friendship."

Sad history gives way to brighter future in Guatemala

Gordon Legge

TODOS SANTOS, Guatemala — Guatemala is a tiny Central American country of 11 million people, probably best known for its high proportion of Mayan people, the remnants of a once great civilization that flourished in the region long before the time of Christ.

But around the 9th century AD, the civilization went into sudden, unexplained decline. In the early 1500s the Spanish conquered and colonized the area.

The Mayans were treated as inferior, used as indentured labor, reminiscent of feudal times in medieval Europe. Even after the country became independent in 1847, the Mayans continued to be treated like second-class citizens by the mixed Ladino (Spanish/Mayan) ruling class.

35-year civil war

After decades of domination by a tiny Spanish-speaking elite, a civil war referred to as *El Conflicto* broke out in the 1950s. It was led by impoverished Mayan peasants and sympathetic ex-military members and lasted for the next 35 years.

Last year, a peace accord was signed and calm is returning to Guatemala. "For the first time in 40 years, they have a relatively honest government trying to do the right thing by the country," says Daniel Livermore, Canadian ambassador to Guatemala, sitting in his office high above the capital of Guatemala City.

Pablo's seen it all

One person who has seen it all is Desiderio Martin Pablo, IMDI's director. Born in Todos Santos, as a teenager he longed to run off to the city and become educated. But his father was determined to keep him at home and arranged for Pablo to be married.

Life was hard. Pablo, now 62, recounts walking 40 miles across the mountains every week carrying 80 pounds of eggs on his back for sale in a nearby city. "You had to work very hard, like an animal," he remembers.

Pablo first came in contact with the Carricks when they arrived in 1977 to install equipment which would provide purified water. In 1979, the Carricks left Guatemala, forced out by the war's increasing violence.

Although he didn't participate in the war, Pablo almost became one of its tens of thousands of victims. One day in April 1982, the army entered the town and locked 300 people in the Catholic Church and put Pablo, a former mayor, at the door as gatekeeper. The people never expected to leave.

Back to his past

In other towns, where the military had herded people into the church, it was burned to the ground with the people in it. Huddled in fear, the people prayed through the night. The next morning the door was opened and the captives were released.

Apparently, shortly after the army arrived there was a coup d'etat in Guatemala City and the army was ordered back immediately. Pablo left the area for several years, but when he returned he quickly re-established his friendship with the Carricks.

Before long he was put in charge of the region's new reforestation project, replenishing the trees chopped down to provide fuel for cooking and heating. In 1994, Pablo was named director of all the projects.

A shepherd girl in Todos Santos.

Comment

Two weeks that were

Bert Hielema

YOU MAY WONDER what the other creature is on the above picture. Well, the statue can be found in a small inner court in the Old City of Antwerp, Belgium, which we visited in October 1996 on our way to Germany. The figure is half of a Belgian pair known in Dutch as Sampie and Mose. Since my nose is of a good size, I wanted to see if it compared with something even bigger.

THE NEW YEAR is upon us and I always love the predictions. Since we have three children who live in the U.S., the state of the dollar is important to us. Last year the expert advice was that by December 1997 the Canadian dollar would be worth at least 75 cents US, and most prognosticators even ventured 80 cents. We know the real truth now.

ABOUT PREDICTIONS: six months ago a Geneva-based group of economic gurus rated South Korea the fifth-best place in the world to invest. Since then, South Korea has seen a 50 per cent drop in value in its stocks and its *won* lost even more (the "won" is the name of South Korea's basic currency.) The IMF (International Monetary Fund), which now must rectify the financial turmoil, in May predicted a world economic boom led by Asia. We also know the real truth about that. The people who make these forecasts are all highly paid, highly educated quacks. Too bad you can't sue economists for malpractice.

I LOVE MY COMPUTER and seem to spend a lot more time these days on the Internet, partly because all our kids and even two granddaughters, have an e-mail address. I once had my hard drive crash on me, an experience I don't want anybody to have. I read in *The Economist* about a hacker in mainland China who created a computer virus that erases the hard drive of anyone who answers No to the question: "Do you think that (Chinese) Prime Minister Li Peng is an idiot?"

WHILE STILL ON the subject of computers: Y2K is a abbreviation of the year 2000, now less than 2 years away. Y2K represents the problem all computers face when 12/31/99 becomes 1/1/00.

Computers do not know that after December 31, 1999, comes January 1, 2000. They will read 1/1/00 as January 1, 1900, and this would create trouble for mortgages, bank books, flight schedules, maintenance schedules, income tax forms, nuclear missiles and wherever a date is important.

Because of this abbreviation some 200 billion lines of computer code must be rewritten. One report I came across states that "the problem is global and must be solved worldwide, because 'bad' data from a computer that hasn't been fixed can contaminate a system that has been upgraded. Of greatest concern are Asian banks, which are making little progress in addressing the problem."

My advice is: come the end of next year, make sure that you have extra cash on hand: your ATM might not work and your government cheque might not arrive on time. Worldwide costs to repair this Y2K problem are estimated at $600 billion (US).

THIS BIT OF black humor is making the rounds in Israel: A scorpion wanted to cross a river, but could not swim. So he asked a frog to ferry him across on his back. "Certainly not," said the frog, "If I take you on my back you'll sting me."

"No, I won't" said the scorpion, "because if I do, we'll both drown." The frog saw the logic in this, so he let the scorpion hop on, and struck out across the water. Halfway across, he felt a terrible pain. The scorpion had stung him.

As the two of them sank below the ripples, the frog asked the scorpion, "Why on earth did you do this?"

Replied the scorpion, "Because this is the Middle East."

Amazing what you find in *The Economist.*

EVERYTHING HAS its price, apparently: a recent snapshot in "USA Today" states that the wealthy are willing to pay $640,000 for "a place in heaven," $487,000 for "true love" and $407,000 for "great intellect."

I AM ALWAYS interested in better ways to save God's creation. I have a huge lawn; well, lawn is too kind a word: large grassy surfaces surrounding our house. I have to mow it occasionally, especially when guests are expected.

A friend once suggested that I should have a goat to do the job, but so far we've not done that. Now I read that a new and fast way to do it is to use a Dynamow, a $200 reel mower that attaches to the back of your bicycle. It allows you to mow the grass twice as fast as you could with a power mower. I have sent for more info and will keep you posted.

"THE SPIRIT IS willing, but the flesh is weak." When people are asked to name their leisure-time favorites, 29 % say reading; 19%, TV watching; and 12%, family time. Well, when it comes to implementing this, the frail nature of the human condition reveals that, daily, the average person spends 4.4 hours watching TV; 27 minutes reading a newspaper; 17 minutes reading books; and 14 minutes reading magazines. I would love to see a profile of how CC readers use their spare time. Anyone want to volunteer?

WE ARE STILL in the very beginning of the year, thus a tip on what went "out" in 1997 and what is "in" this year: Out is Prozac; in is St. John's wort. Out are miniskirts; in are knee-length slit skirts. Out is Buddhism; in is mystical Judaism. Out is Paris; in is London. Out is orange/brown; in is Blue/brown. Out are baseball caps on guys; in is colored nail polish — yes, for men. Out is fake fur; in is real fur. Out is spinning; in is yoga. Out are cell phones; in are digital phones. Is there a business opportunity for some one here?

THE FLU SEASON is upon us and so are the sniffles. How to tell a cold from influenza? Here are some guidelines.

Cold symptoms develop one to three days after the virus enters the body and last about seven days. Symptoms include: runny or stuffed nose; sneezing; scratchy throat; cough.

Flu symptoms are often sudden and last a week. They include: headache, fever of 101 or higher, chills, muscle aches and feeling fatigued, cough, sore throat.

A BOOK RECENTLY published by a New York University professor Peter Unger is called *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence.* Unger thinks that since starvation and poverty are the world's greatest problems, we well-off individuals in the West are called upon to make substantial sacrifices to help them. In his opinion none of us should enjoy more than a moderately comfortable existence and so aid the distant people in distress. All royalties of the book go to Oxfam and UNICEF.

In the same vein, Edward O.Wilson, a Harvard professor and naturalist, in a convocation address at Guelph University, said, "Every human being wants three things for him- or herself, and his or her family: health, a meaningful existence and a pleasant environment. The big news of our time is that all three are locked together and will become more so with the passage of each year.... We have entered the century of the environment and must put our house in order."

***TIME* MAGAZINE,** in a special issue, makes the same call, with articles such as "Wells Running Dry"; "Melt Away Future"; "Patching the Holes"; "Ghosts of the Forests"; "The Way of the West is Poison."

WILL THE COMPUTER bring us the New Paradise? Let's wait to see how we deal with the Y2K problem.

Bert Hielema is more wiry than wired, and last year ran, walked or biked 1,900 km, mostly along Highway #37 north of Tweed, Ont., where he lives.

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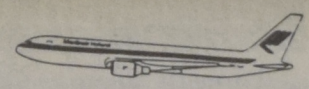

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Editorial

Love should cover all wrong, but not cover it up

Three people have so far responded negatively to the fact that we ran a short article reporting on the sexual abuse trial of a Christian school principal in Cambridge, Ont. Three may not be many, but for every one who contacts us there must be dozens who also disliked the publicity we gave to this case. Charges of sensationalism and accusations of shame told us that these people believe that we erred grievously and that matters of sexual abuse are better kept out of a Christian paper.

We have some sympathy for that position because we think it comes out of a desire not to cast the first stone. These are people who realize that none of us is without sin and that they themselves have no need or desire to know about someone else's sin. We respect that sentiment. It's a biblical attitude, backed up by such teachings as taking the beam out of your own eye before you remove the splinter from your neighbor's. Perhaps these people are motivated by 1 Peter 4:8, which reads, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." Exactly what Peter means when he says that love covers over a multitude of sins is debatable, but it does mean that love does not delight in evil and that it always protects, always trusts, always hopes (1 Cor. 13).

Crime has a public character

Yet in spite of this, we believe that we must report on such matters as a principal's abuse of children. Allow us to explain why.

The first thing we consider is the fact that we are dealing with a crime. A crime involves sin, but sin is not our focus. Of course we do not consider it our business to tell people about another person's sins. That's between God and the sinner. The church may have reason to get involved, but newspapers have no task there.

A crime is different. A crime has a public character. That is why criminal cases are always presented as "Regina versus John Doe." The state gets involved as it accuses and prosecutes the person. When it is successful in its prosecution, the state sentences that person and applies the penalty.

The state must not only *do* justice; it must also *be seen* to do justice. Justice is a public matter that newspapers will and must report on. *Christian Courier* is no exception, though it generally limits its reporting to crimes involving the Christian community.

That does not mean that *Christian Courier* reports on every crime committed within the Christian community. When a Christian in, let's say, Bowmanville, Ont., commits a crime, whether of abuse or theft, we will not necessarily report on that crime. But we will report on it if that person has been or could be in a position of leadership in more than one community. A pastor or a teacher come to mind as leaders who are likely to move around.

A way of stopping evil

There are other supporting reasons for publishing such stories of abuse. First of all, we want to encourage victims of abuse to come forward now that they see that justice will be done. That coming forward may be necessary for their own healing or it may be necessary to stop others from being abused. The Christian community still has a long way to go in being more open about abuse taking place within its borders.

Secondly, we hope that these reports will act as a warning to other leaders who might be tempted to exploit those over whom they have power. They should know that it's increasingly difficult to get away with abuse of power. In the past, a lot of abuse was covered up and people had reason to think that you could ruin other people's lives and still pass for a respected leader in your community. The fear of that not happening in the future might be a deterrent.

Finally, these stories help the larger community in not hiring again for positions of trust people who have been found guilty of abuse. We have a task to help each other avoid giving trust to people who have a serious weakness in that area. That's not to say that the Christian community should not try to help the abuser as well as the abused. But the protection of the group may have to precede the needs of the individual who has become a threat to the safety of the group.

No surrender to threats

We have been accused of being sensational. That's the last thing we want to be. One clear indicator of our motives is that we placed the story in the back of the paper. Besides, we didn't focus on lurid detail even though we could have said so much more about the Cambridge situation. The court records are open to public scrutiny. We focused instead on the nature and severity of the crime. We did mention name and places to give the story credibility and to avoid casting suspicion on others who might be associated with the situation. The hardest but unavoidable part of this decision was that it is hurtful to people who are related to the abuser.

Some people may wonder if we do not harm the cause of Christian journalism by publishing these stories. We do get angry reactions. Some people threaten to cancel their subscriptions when they don't like what we do. One person called and said he would wring the editor's neck if he were in his presence. Some people think they can solve their problem by shooting the messenger.

But to give in to threats would really hurt the cause of Christian journalism. Besides, we believe that our readership realizes more and more that crimes like abuse can no longer be covered up. *Christian Courier* has been a leader among Christian publications in that we broke the silence surrounding abuse already in 1986, several years before churches were talking about abuse guidelines.

Paul urged a public rebuke

There is a relevant passage in 1 Timothy 5:17-20 which shows that God wants us to be public about the sins of spiritual leaders. Paul tells Timothy not to entertain an accusation against an elder "unless it is brought by two or three witnesses." But then he adds: "Those [elders] who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning." Paul does not distinguish between crime and sin here, but he does indicate that love should not cover up the sins of leaders.

We believe that what we did in publishing the story was done in love. We interpret 1 Peter 4:8 to say that love *forgives* rather than *covers up* a multitude of sins. **BW**

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent weekly that seeks to:
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◆ provide contact for the Christian community.

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On boundaries and too much sophistication

Pedagogeries

Alyce Oosterhuis

We arrived in Nairobi at 10 p.m. A taxi driver whisked us out of the airport and into his barely roadworthy vehicle for a "quick" trip to our hotel. Unfortunately, the driver did not know where the hotel was located and we drove along dark and narrow winding streets looking for signs to St. Michael Street. A mo-ped driver assisted us to nowhere and several police officers were no more helpful. Finally, two young women pointed us in the right direction and by 11 o'clock we were within the confines of Hampton House.

In that hour of searching I formed my first impressions of Africa: the airport could use a good Dutch cleaning; Kenyans' knowledge of English is more limited than I had expected; the Japanese must use Africa as the dumping ground for their used vehicles; my household plants are the trees in Kenya; wonderful scents and warm breezes move through ever-open windows; heavily guarded houses are protected with massive gates and huge barking dogs.

While driving through our hotel's neighborhood, I was particularly struck by the high walls and guarded gates that mark the boundaries of every person's estate. Some days later, I was informed by a Kenyan native that the perimeters' walls are built before a house is constructed. Each person seeks to mark off his or her territory clearly. Walls, gates, and guards also provide security, even though the guards are unarmed and tend to run when confronted with danger.

Stark contrast

Driving through villages a day later I was struck with the marked contrast in the need for boundaries. No walls surround the palm thatched roof huts that encircle the village "common area." People walk along and across the roads where cars have to traverse the speed bumps which reduce the number of casualties in the towns. And when a car gets stuck in the vast rut of a washed out road, everyone gathers around to help — filling up the rut with local stones after the car has been moved.

Home in Edmonton two weeks later, I thought about boundaries and boundlessness. Our need for boundaries is evident in our homes and in our work. It is also clearly evident in our schools. I close my classroom door and this is now my space and that of my third or fourth or tenth graders or college class.

The subject I teach is shared in teaching only with those who have the same discipline subject orientation. The tasks which I must complete are given to me and only to others when it is a committee assignment. And as we live and work within these "boundaries" we tend to perceive a uniqueness and ownership within our space that does not transcend our established walls and gates.

What do I mean? I know of teachers who have taught a specific grade for a number of years and cannot conceive of being able to teach any other level — fourth graders are so vastly different from third graders that teaching skills cannot transcend the difference.

I have seen "team teaching" situations in which each member carves out his or her teaching expertise with the understanding that no other team member broaches that area. The boundaries are determined by our educational background and experiences, and we come to see the drawn lines as immutable. And when we come home at the end of our public day we retreat into our private space of hobbies and interests that separate our work from play.

Sophisticated division

Thinking of Nairobi's walled housing complexes and the Kenyan villagers' undivided areas, I am struck by the fact that when we teach arithmetic we begin with number concepts; then we teach addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Of these four arithmetical operations, division is the most difficult and, consequently, sophisticated. Since the more educated Kenyans live in the cities, they are the ones who have mastered dividing property, assets, time and money.

In the same way, the educated North American masses have learned to divide and claim their property, expertise, time and money. Maybe we have all become too sophisticated for our own good. We need a return to a seamless wholeness where all of life — schooling, property, time, energy — embraces us in a Kingdom village and God's gifts are multiplied for all.

Alyce Horzelenberg Oosterhuis is preparing for another term of teaching education and psychology at The King's University College in Edmonton.

Writers misinterpret history

My response to the two features of Nov. 14 "Coping with the burden of the past" by Michael Geisterfer and Meck Groot is: If someone wants to take on a burden that is not his or hers, that is a personal privilege. But it's not very biblical.

I would also like to differ with the editor when he says their experience of feeling alienated is fairly common among young persons growing up in "a close-knit community that they feel as restrictive."

Was I offended by the articles? Maybe somewhat. But I would like to think it was more a feeling of sadness that the writers look at history the way they do. They take a very small part of it and try to interpret that.

Personal knowledge

I will leave South Africa and apartheid out of the discussion. But both writers talk about Indonesia and that hits a sore spot. It so happens that I spent some time there and that I was willing to give my life for the freedom of the Indonesian people. Six thousand young men did, besides many more in all kinds of occupations — missionaries, nurses, doctors, road builders, rubber plantation administrators.

Statistics show that a lot more Indonesian people died by the hands of their own than by the Dutch, be that military or civilian. I would that I had never seen the cruelties Indonesians inflicted on their own people.

Michael, your last line: "Now I realize that what I really need is to be forgiven myself" makes you dear to me. Please, forgive yourself. You are innocent and your father was innocent. The high price your father paid was not for the sins of his parents (read the gospels on that).

And Ms. Groot, maybe the Dutch planted flags and did some wrong things. The Indonesian ambassador to the Netherlands said words to the effect that they had forgiven the Dutch. They should forgive themselves.

Gerald Schroor
Oshawa, Ont.

A bi-weekly with humor would be perfect

We want to thank you deeply for the manner in which you are directing *Christian Courier*. From a "stuffy" run-of-the-mill magazine you have brought it (slowly but surely and wisely) to a paper which is meaningful and directs your readers to a healthy life, following Jesus and being led by his Spirit.

The only small criticism I have is that I seldom read anything that makes me smile, let alone laugh. "A night at Van Andel Arena" was a jewel among all the serious stuff.

By "nature" we Christian Reformed people take ourselves too seriously. We have to "reform" from that characteristic behavior.

We loved Marian Van Til's "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Click here."

I admire you very much for meeting all those deadlines. If you would become a bi-weekly, I would read every issue from cover to cover, which I cannot do now because I'm too busy in my retirement. We pray for all you people at CC who have a special place marketing the Kingdom of God.

Arie and Joanne Klein
Hamilton, Ont.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.
Canada mail: Publications Mail Registration No. 0451. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.
U.S. mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Subscriptions:	**Canada**	**U.S.A.**
(effective Feb. 1, 1995)	(GST incl.)	(GST free)
one year (44 issues)	$43.50	$35.00 U.S.
two years (88 issues)	$82.00	$66.00 U.S.
three years (132 issues)	$123.00	$99.00 U.S.
overseas one year	$135 airmail	
	$85.00 surface mail	

Advertising deadlines: display advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.; classified advertising: Thursday, 8:30 a.m. All deadlines are for the following week's issue. See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published weekly on Fridays except for Feb. 27, April 10, May 29, July 10, Aug. 14, Oct. 2, Nov. 27, and Dec. 25.
All correspondence should be addressed to: 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1, Tel.: 905-682-8311 or fax: 905-682-8313
PRINTED IN CANADA
This tabloid contains recycled paper.

Arts/Media

Book Review

Adept biography 'pulls' young readers 'into' C.S. Lewis

Marian Van Til

C.S. Lewis: Christian and Storyteller.

by Beatrice Gormley

Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 1998. ISBN 0-8028-5121-5 (cloth cover). $15 (US). Also available in paperback.

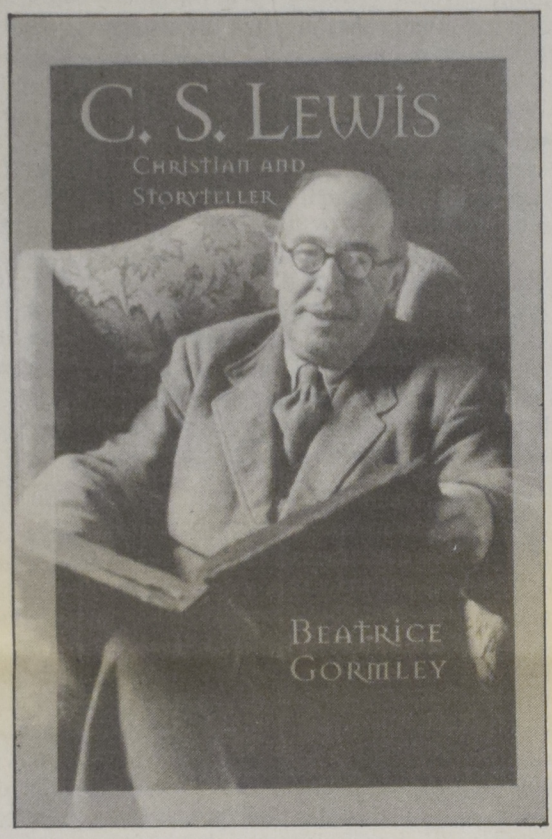
In order to write a good children's story you must "meet children as equals," said C.S. Lewis. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia do just that, one of the reasons they continue to be so popular nearly 50 years after they were written and 35 years after their author's death.

Beatrice Gormley's biography of this great Irish Christian apologist and children's writer does that too. The book is aimed at readers 12 years and up; the "and up" can easily include adults.

Remain childlike

Whenever necessary, Gormley explains terms and situations which might be foreign to modern young readers (especially North American readers). But she's never condescending, nor is her writing pedestrian. Lewis would undoubtedly approve. He and his brother, Warren, continued to read children's books all their lives, the best of which will always speak to adults too, he felt.

Gormley has written other books for young readers, including the story of the first famous woman astronomer, Maria Mitchell, which was reviewed in CC, Feb. 7, 1997.



Gormley has the Christian sensibility to understand Lewis's Christian sensibility. She has an obvious affection for her subject, but she doesn't whitewash him, despite her intended young audience. Without being too analytical or too psychologizing, she gets at who the man was and how he became what he was both as a person and as a greatly influential Christian.

We're invited to peek into "Jack" Lewis's happy early childhood in Belfast. We watch the very early development of Jack's great love of reading, poetry, fantasy, things medieval, of creating alternate universes — of his great intellect (by age 15 he was already a formidable translator of Greek and Latin).

We watch the profound and life-long bond form between Jack and Warren, which deepened dramatically after the first tragedy in their lives: the cancer death of their beloved mother when Jack was only nine. We see and understand the seeds of distance sown between Lewis and his father, which reaped much guilt and frustration for years afterward.

We observe the adolescent Jack moving away from the Christianity of his youth, perfunctory as it may have been, to an avowed "rational" atheism. And we watch the ironic, slyly humorous way in which the Spirit gradually pulls him around to a wholehearted embracing of Christ as his (and the only possible) Savior.

Having decided during his teens as he prepared for Oxford University that Christianity was based on myth just like the Greek and Norse myths he so loved, Jack strongly asserted that no educated, intelligent, rational person would or could conclude otherwise. But once at Oxford, Lewis was dumbfounded to find out that the best thinkers and scholars around him were Christians, and men who took Christianity very seriously (God's little joke on him, he later concluded).

Still, it took 10 years of intellectual sparring — with Arthur Greeves (whom he knew already when they were teenagers), Owen Barfield, Nevill Coghill, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien and others who came together in a group called the "Inklings" — before Jack would finally quit fighting the Spirit's prompting and admit that Jesus is the Son of God, and then, his Savior.

Lewis described himself as the most reluctant of converts, yet despite his initial questions he totally opened himself to a biblical faith which he then felt a kind of ethical duty to incorporate into his thought and life. Once he did that, he understood the joy that he had yearned for from early childhood, and which he realized is something every human being craves.

Beyond Narnia

It's possible that many young readers of this biography will be familiar only with Lewis's Narnia Chronicles, and not with his more difficult essays and apologetic works. For those readers, Gormley's pointing out the many ways in which the Narnia stories reflect Lewis's own experiences, personality and setting will be intriguing. And the other parts of Gormley's story about Lewis will undoubtedly make young readers want to eventually tackle some of his other writings (The Screwtape Letters may be the most accessible).

In this technological age of entertainment, through Lewis, Gormley shows young readers, especially Christian readers, the great value of using God's gift of imagination, both for one's person and one's faith. That imagination can even lead one to God, through the Spirit's prompting — as many of Lewis's readers have testified has happened to them through Lewis's books.

Faith and imagination intertwine

Gormley sums it up: "Jack Lewis believed, as his friend J.R.R. Tolkien [author of the Lord of the Rings trilogy] believed, that whatever is worthwhile in the creative works of human beings comes from God. Especially in creating myths, a storyteller is reflecting (although of course in an imperfect way) God's truth. As a writer, Jack did not think of himself as 'bringing into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before.' Rather, he was trying to represent the beauty and wisdom that he had found in his life — that God had given to him.

"George Sayer, a friend of Jack's who wrote a biography of him, feels that 'the Narnia stories reveal more about Jack's personal religion than any of his theological books.' As Jack explained later, it was Aslan the Christ-like lion who pulled the first Narnia book together and then inspired the other six books. In describing Aslan, Jack could describe his own experience of the Son of God.

"In each of the seven [Narnia] books, there is a moment when

The Lewis's wardrobe, which inspired The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

the children meet Aslan. It is an awe-inspiring moment, because the Lion is 'so bright and real and strong that everything else began at once to look pale and shadowy compared with him.' No one can keep secrets from him — he knows them better than they know themselves. 'They felt as glad as anyone can who feels afraid,' wrote Jack in Prince Caspian, 'and as afraid as anyone can who feels glad.' Like everything about him, Aslan's voice is beautiful and frightening at the same time — 'a sort of heavy, golden voice,' thinks Jill in The Silver Chair.

"For Digory and Polly in The Magician's Nephew, knowing and loving Aslan makes them feel reborn: 'Such a sweetness and power rolled about them and over and entered into them that they felt they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before.'"

Highly recommended for church and Christian school libraries, and as a gift for readers of just about any age.

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1998 Christian unity week focusses on the Spirit's help

Marian Van Til

TORONTO — Next week, Jan. 18-25, is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). This year's theme is from Paul's letter to the Romans: "The Spirit Helps Us."

Describing that theme a CCC press release says: "The presence of the Holy Spirit produces not fear but hope, not slavery but freedom, not division but unity — 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.'"

An illustration from the CCC's bulletin cover for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The CCC notes that there is much working together of Christians from different traditions but at the same time the council is "painfully aware of the fragility of our communities, the brokenness of our society and the weakness of our response to the needs of the suffering in our midst and of our fragile earth in the face of God's promises."

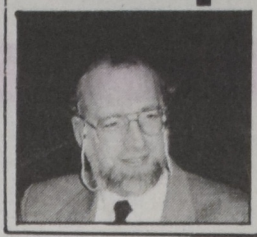
Consequently, the CCC says that "during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we celebrate the presence of God in our midst, and call on the Spirit to renew us in unity as heirs, with Christ, in the new creation. Helped by the Spirit, we are renewed in our Christian commitment to reconciliation and in care for all of God's creation."

The CCC has distributed worship and Bible study resource kits for the week, written by an interdenominational committee. Each kit contains worship service liturgy and material, camera-ready readings and services, daily reflections, sermon helps, 25 full-color bulletin covers, an 11" x 17" poster, suggestions for ecumenical prayer throughout the year, and permission to reproduce the worship services and Bible studies for congregational use.

The more than 50-year-old CCC is "a community of [19] churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit..." Its diverse membership includes the Salvation Army, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, the Reformed Church in Canada (RCA), the United and Anglican churches and 12 other churches.

Are women forbidden to wear gold?

Chapter & Verse



Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
● Al Wolters

"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

In the light of this verse, what are we to make of the fact that few Christians today have any problem with women wearing gold — or pearls, for that matter, or braids? Does this mean that they are all openly disobedient to a clear and explicit apostolic command? Or does it show that this passage simply reflects the culture of Paul's time and is no longer directly relevant to our situation today?

In my opinion, both of these reactions to the prevalence of gold jewellery among Christian women today is based on a misunderstanding of what the apostle is saying here. Both responses fail to appreciate that the apostle is using a well-known rhetorical figure. It is the figure which scholars have called "dialectical negation" — a rather pedantic name for a way of speaking which is common in both the Bible and in our own ordinary speech. It involves sentences of the form "not A but B," when the meaning is "not so much A as B."

Not so literal

We talk this way all the time in ordinary parlance. We'll say of a man who is head over heels in love: "He doesn't love her — he *adores* her." Realters will say: "We don't sell houses, we sell homes."

Allan Fotheringham recently wrote in his column in *Macleans*: "Olson isn't a first-degree murderer. He's the most perverted serial killer in Canadian history." Everyone understands that these sentences, despite superficial appearances, do not mean to claim that the head-over-heels man in actual fact does not love his beloved, that realters do not sell houses, or that Olson is not a first-degree murderer. The negation is not to be taken literally.

Rhetorical devise

The same is true in biblical usage. When the prophet Zechariah writes: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6), he does not mean to deny that the Spirit manifests God's power in human life.

When the Apostle Paul writes to Philemon that he is getting Onesimus back "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (Phil.16) he does not mean that Philemon will no longer be Onesimus's master, but that the master-slave relationship will be transformed.

When the Old Testament prophets repeatedly stress that the Lord does not want sacrifice, but obedience (e.g. Jer. 7:22-23), they do not mean to oppose the worship which God himself had instructed, but they are stressing that it is the inward disposition that counts.

It is a misunderstanding of the rhetorical figure of dialectical negation when some biblical scholars have argued that Paul expected Onesumus to be freed, or that the prophets of the Old Testament were against the Torah of Moses.

Similarly, the apostle here is not really telling Christian women that they should not wear their "Sunday-best" — ironically, a person's best outfit has been called their "Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes" but he is saying that fancy clothes cannot compare in importance to a holy lifestyle.

Message not relative

That is a message which is not culturally relative, but is of direct and immediate relevance to Christians today. It is true today as in Paul's day that women should adorn themselves, not with gold jewellery and other expensive accoutrements, but with good deeds that befit their commitment.

So I don't feel in the least guilty for the gift that I recently gave my wife. In fact, I think Paul would have approved. After all, what I gave her was not a gold necklace, but a symbol of my love.

Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Thirty years ago, he also gave his wife a gold wedding band.

Toronto university students help nuns aid needy

TORONTO — Since Mother Teresa's death last September, 37 University of Toronto students have been tutoring children in the Parkdale neighborhood and helping prepare and serve meals for former psychiatric patients at the Toronto house of the Missionaries of Charity. It's a way of keeping Mother Teresa's example alive.

Although the students study theology and moral philosophy at the U of T's Newman (Catholic) Centre, they get back to the basics of simple service to the needy in their work with the Missionaries of Charity, reports the *Toronto Star.*

The four nuns in Parkdale avoid attention and do not give interviews nor allow photography in their house. They are following Mother Teresa's credo of letting their work speak for itself.

The sisters saw that neighborhood children were struggling with English and needed help after school. Now, 42 children come to the house regularly and settle down to work, with no after-school snack or play time.

Practising love

"What the sisters really do is love," says Sarah Byers, a PhD student in philosophy at the Newman Centre. "They see each person they serve as a person, not as a social problem. I think of it as an honor to come here and be with the sisters. They are so pure of heart."

Last month, Byers was teaching mathematics to six boys in the basement of the nuns' house. She gave them fractions to add and, quickly, their restless squabbling ceased. They went to work and got the right answers. They liked what they were doing.

Matt Biergans, who's working on his master's degree in medieval studies, also works with the nuns. "It's a great feeling helping because when you see the people who come you know they never get a decent meal," he says. "They're so thin. They're very thankful. This is my way of giving back some of the gifts I've been given. I've had so many opportunities and I'm glad I can offer these simple things back."

The nuns also visit the elderly, help new immigrants, feed patients in a nearby nursing home, and run a shelter for homeless women.

Feature

Lean down the mountain!

Sonia Jones

"Up and at 'em, Anna!" I cried, shaking my college roommate's shoulder. "It snowed in the mountains last night. They got five inches in Squaw Valley!"

"Go away," came a muffled voice from under the covers. "It's Sunday. I'm going to *shirts*. Leave me alone."

The German immigrant farmers in our area would never dream of missing a *shirts* service on a Sunday *morgen*, and they all expected their children to go with them. I, however, was an avowed agnostic, and I couldn't imagine going to church when the snow was flying. I stared sadly at the pile of covers.

"It'll be another one of those fire and brimstone sermons," I warned her.

Anna's family had taken me to their church, so I knew what I was talking about. The pastor had droned on about sin and damnation to a congregation of good, hard-working, God-fearing families. It seemed to me like a case of misdirected energy. The folks in the pews were obviously the salt of the earth.

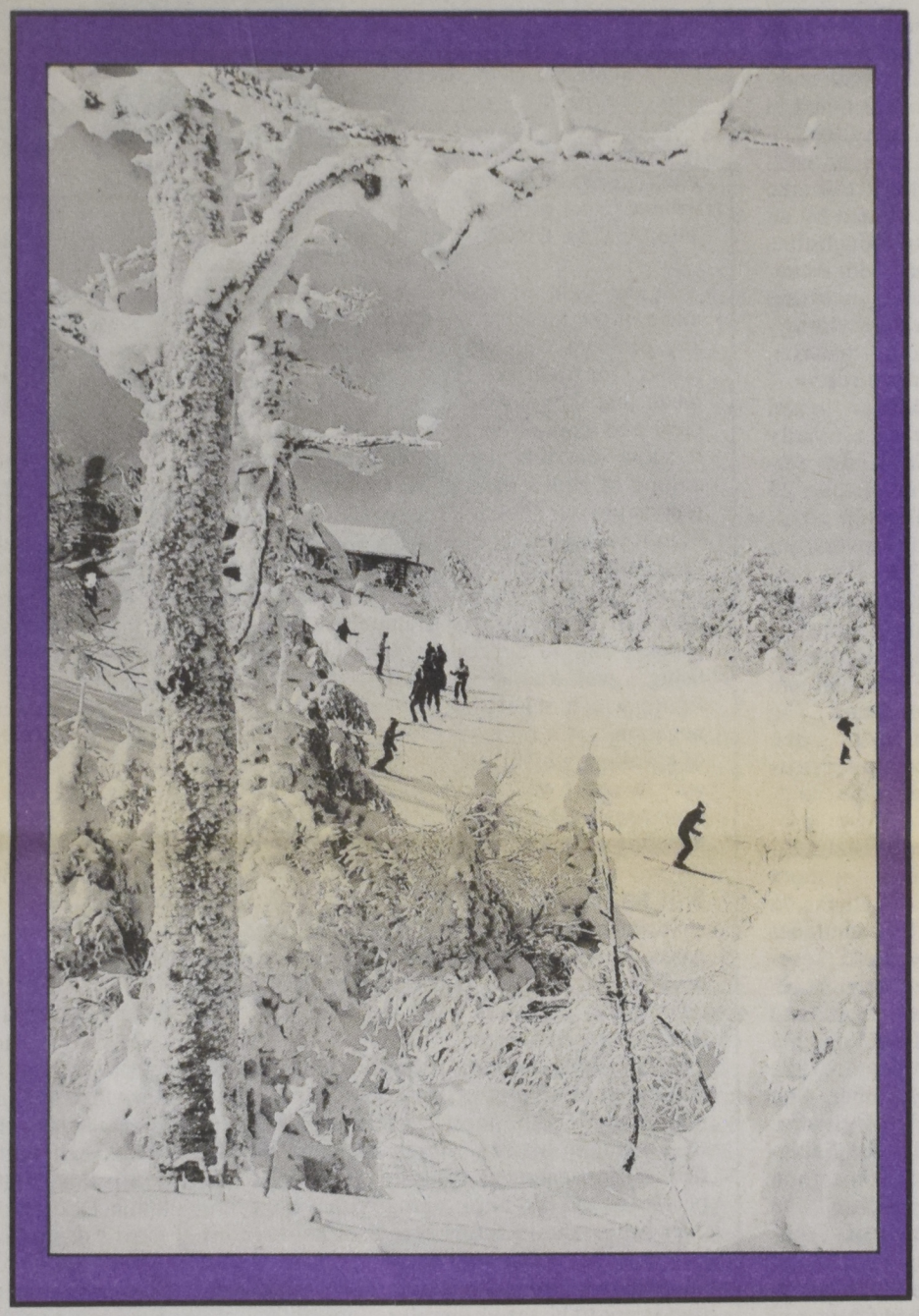
"Forget the hellfire, Anna," I pleaded. "Just think about all that beautiful cold snow waiting for us in Squaw Valley!"

But Anna was adamant, and I set out for the slopes alone.

It turned out to be a perfect day for skiing. I made long, straight tracks through the virgin powder that covered the mountainside. I bent my knees and leaned forward, holding my ski poles under my arms while snow-covered spruce trees hurtled by. Anyone seeing me then, I thought smugly to myself, would surely take me for a professional.

Then all at once the blurry evergreens decided to make a quick left turn, and suddenly there they were, standing like a small army of towering sentinels all lined up in front of me. At this point any other skier would have simply planted a pole in the snow and executed a smart turn with a deft wiggle of the hips. But I was not just any other skier. I was, I am profoundly ashamed to say, no skier at all.

I did what I had to do to avoid a violent and untimely encounter with the trees. I threw myself down in the snow and slid through the powder, my skis acting like the blade of a snow plow, until I came to a halt. As I picked myself up and brushed the snow from my brand-new ski outfit (a pink-and-mauve job with matching hat and mittens), I wondered for the tenth time that day how other people managed to change direction with such apparent ease. They sailed effortlessly back and forth down the slopes, tacking this way and that whenever it took their fancy. How did they do it?



There was always the bunny hill, of course, where beginners like myself could calmly learn to ski with the help of qualified instructors while normal people scoffed at them from their perches on the chair-lift overhead. But this was not an option for me. I didn't consider myself to be the bunny type, in spite of the pink-and-mauve overkill and my complete lack of any other sort of qualification for tackling the trails.

I spent the next few hours schussing straight down the slopes, never realizing the potential danger my uncontrolled manoeuvers were creating for the other skiers. I tried desperately to move my hips the way they did, but my efforts were in vain. My skis had a mind of their own, and there was nothing I could do to make them take me where I wanted to go. Needless to say by the end of the morning I was exhausted and not a little discouraged.

After lunch I was back on the slopes again, doggedly (surely not bull-headedly) trying to develop enough control over my skis to avoid hitting trees, innocent people and other unsuspecting obstacles, but by mid-afternoon I finally gave up. Deflated, submissive and utterly humbled, I approached the bunny hill ski instructor and asked him to give me a private lesson.

"It's easy to see what your trouble is," he said, after watching me struggle for a little while. "You're catching your inside edges. See how you're digging them into the snow? You'll never be able to change directions until you release those edges and get your skis parallel with the slope."

"How am I supposed I do that?"

"Just lean down the mountain."

"What?" I exclaimed, peering down the slope to my right. "You want me to *lean down the mountain*?"

"Of course," he smiled. "How else do you think you're going to get out of your rut?"

"But I can't," I wailed.

"Why not? What are you scared of?"

"Bodily harm? Permanent injury? Impending death?" I suggested.

"That's not going to happen. Trust me."

"But it's unnatural to lean down mountains."

"Maybe so. But you've got to forget about being natural and start being unnatural for a change."

By the end of the afternoon I was actually skiing, and no beginning bunny was ever more elated than I was. I planted my poles in the snow and executed some fairly well-controlled turns with a balanced motion of the hips. I made curvy tracks through the virgin powder as I moved cautiously down the slopes. The other skiers were no longer in danger of being flattened as I went by, nor was I likely to end up plastered all over a rock or a lurking spruce tree. I had placed enough trust in the ski instructor to overcome my fear of leaning down the mountain, and I was free at last.

When I got back to the dorm that evening I couldn't wait to tell Anna all about how I had learned to ski while she was stuck in a dismal, stuffy *shirts*.

After I finished my story, Anna sat there musing for a while.

"You know, it's funny," she said finally. "Our pastor gave us a sermon this morning about repentance. He told us that it means to change directions."

"That's funny?"

"Don't you get it? You decided to go skiing rather than come to *shirts* with me, so God taught you about repentance in Squaw Valley instead."

"The Sermon on the Bunny Hill. There's no escape, is there?"

"The Hound of Heaven," said Anna, cryptically.

It was only in retrospect that an aging agnostic came to see that her experience on the ski slope dealt with more than just changing directions. Many, many years later, at the unheard-of age of fifty years and four months, I gave my heart to an infinitely patient and loving Savior who had been standing at my door and knocking for over half a century. I realized, finally, that God meets us wherever we are, and he holds us close to him long before we are even aware that he is near.

He has a sense of humor, too. He lets us fall flat on our faces as we struggle to control our direction in life, and he is certainly not above sending ski instructors to teach us the basic lessons of the gospel. My Sunday in Squaw Valley had been a living parable of the greatest story ever told: the story of fallen humanity finding freedom in Christ.

Sonia Jones is a freelance writer and holds a PhD degree in Romance languages from Harvard University. She now attends shirts twice every Sunday at All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Halifax, N.S.

In Memoriam—Klaas Terpstra

October 26, 1919 - December 21, 1997

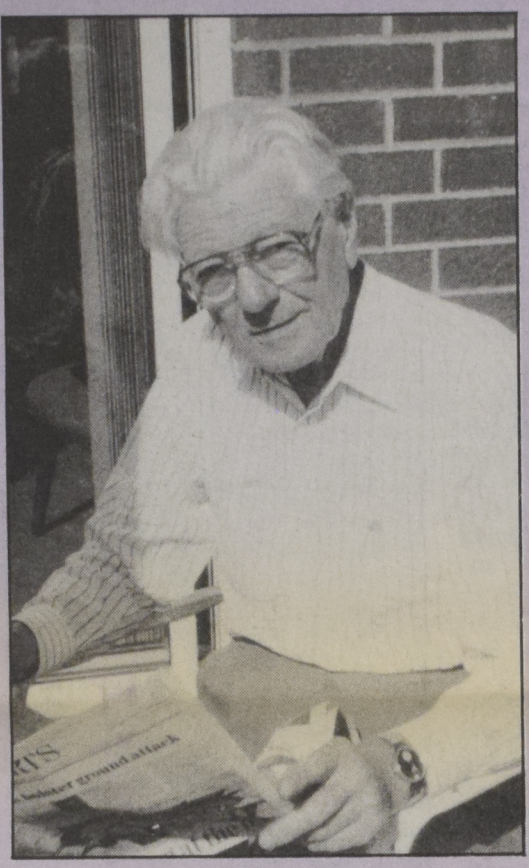
The best is still to come

Bert Witvoet

Klaas Terpstra is gone, at least from this scene we call life on the old, fallen earth. Being the recipient of his letters to the editor and personal notes from time to time, I consider myself his friend. Some time in April of 1997, he wrote me the following in a personal letter:

"I never knew the evening of life could be so pleasant. Just like all elderly I had to enlarge my nightstand. First you take off your glasses, then you remove your artificial teeth, then the hearing aid. Next you put some Tylenol within reach for possible pain, Preparation H for itchy hemorrhoids, a flashlight to prevent falling down over some obstacle, and a glass of water for a regular trip to the bathroom."

He knew that his days were numbered. His last years were not without problems, even though he refused to dwell on the negative. "Two years ago, I had that flesh eating disease and almost lost my life or leg," he wrote in the same letter. "Last summer, the doctor told me, 'You are full of cancer.' Because of an infection in my leg I am still in pain and walk with a cane. Cancer is being treated with laser. They cannot cure it, but hopefully they can slow down the process. Still we enjoy every day and are thankful we are still together. Whether I have six months to live or six years, only the Lord knows, and he doesn't tell. That's enough about my aches and pains."



A good funeral

It was good to attend Klaas' funeral. You can say that only when you attend the funeral of a positive believer who has lived a full life, I think. You are actually lifted in spirit.

Klaas' son John, known to CC readers, read a fascinating poem about immigration called "Forty days and forty nights." Being a true son of his father, John interweaved humor and insight. He recalled the early days of immigration when English was still a foreign tongue. John needed air in his bicycle tire and asked the service station attendant for "sky in his bands" (the Dutch word for air and sky is the same Dutch word *lucht* and a tire is a *band*. Towards the end of the poem John saw God's sign of faithfulness, a rainbow, and called it "the band in the sky."

Son-in-law Casey Boks mentioned that Klaas was always on the road and always home for supper. "He had an appointment with his family," he told customers. Life-long friend John VanderBoom said that Klaas, although he could not eat the last few weeks, was now sitting at the Supper of the Lamb.

Pastor John Zantingh dwelt on part of Psalm 121 in a sermon entitled "The Lord, Your Watchful Companion." He referred to Klaas' life as "a meaningful, powerful, courageous life. He left a mark on the lives near him." Had Klaas been alive he would have told Zantingh, as was his wont, to make his sermon short.

I will close this little account of my friend Klaas, former board member of Hamilton District Christian High School while I was a teacher there and briefly board member of Calvinist Contact Publishing, with his own words: "The past was good, the present great and the best is still to come."

Klaas Terpstra: a restless salesman/church worker enters God's rest

Nicholas Terpstra

Our dad was a restless man. He left home to work as a teenager, was a young soldier when World War II broke out, and later joined the Resistance. He travelled across the Netherlands as a grain broker after the war, until his restlessness sent him over the ocean to Canada. That restlessness then sent him — and all of us — back and forth across the country, and kept him on the road.

It was on the road that he made a living, selling paintings, cars and insurance. But most of all, it was on the road that he made his life. He loved being a salesman because it meant that he was independent — he wasn't tied down to an office. It also meant that he had time and freedom to mix business and pleasure.

He had no hobbies. His real pleasure was in serving the church — the wonderful, caring congregation of Immanuel and the Christian Reformed Church at large. His pleasure was in serving the Christian school, and particularly Hamilton District Christian High. It was in serving the Dutch Credit Union. In all this service, his restlessness and independence had a focus and a purpose.

Many people have emphasized how much Dad did for these organizations. You should know, too, how much the church, the Christian school and the credit union did for him. They gave him a chance to serve, to be appreciated, to exercise his values and to have fun.

A sense of irreverence

Here you encountered his restlessness as an impatience with anything that took too long, whether it was a speech, a meeting, a sermon, a hospital visit, a phone call, a synod or a funeral. You saw it in the way he had little use for rules or for some of our community's judgmental codes of proper conduct. But he nurtured a strong sense of justice, humanity and compassion. You saw it in his irreverence. He loved to get a joke in, especially when he thought a situation was getting too serious or when people were getting too self-important or self-righteous. Humor was the touch of God's grace that brought us back to our senses. He would want us to see that grace today.

If you saw him active in his business and community you might be surprised to know that in many ways he was a private and shy man. He was not a person for small talk. Yet his business and his community gave him a lot of things to talk about and a lot of people to talk to. I think that many of you had his 10- or 15-minute visits — brief, to the point and fun.

A powerful typewriter

And when he couldn't visit, he wrote. We have to give full credit to that typewriter. The Apostle James said that the tongue is a small but powerful instrument. I think that in Dad's case it was the IBM Selectric typewriter that was small but powerful. He spoke through that machine. Notes, cards, letters — brief, to the point and funny.

Through that machine, my dad made *human* contact. When this restless man decided last Wednesday that he could no longer stand the hospital bed, he headed home to Mom and to that typewriter so that he could communicate with the people he loved.

Long ago, St. Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they find their rest in thee." Dad's restless life was rooted here: a strong faith that he seldom talked openly about, though he did sing and type about it — a very Calvinist conviction that a loving and merciful God guides our path, gives us strength, numbers our hairs and numbers our days. In this he found his hope, his confidence and his rest. And in serving God by serving his family and community, he found his joy. One of his favorite hymns says it simply:

When peace like a river attendeth my ways,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Dad has found his rest, and it is truly well with his soul.

Nicholas Terpstra is a history professor at the University of Regina, Regina, Sask.

Opinion

After Christmas it's downhill all the way

Syrt Wolters

We have celebrated Christmas again. Although the secular world claims this event for less honorable reasons, it remains a very important manifestation of the Christian faith: God came down to our world in the person of Jesus Christ to restore the broken relationship between humankind and God.

But compared with our other religious celebrations, haven't we attached too much value to Christmas? The birth of Jesus Christ as a human being was, of course, an earth-shaking event, when God's promise to send a Redeemer finally became reality. Think of it: the holiness of God enters our sin-infested world to repair our broken communion with God. That's far beyond our human understanding!

Is it too far-fetched to compare Jesus' rescue mission with that of the Allies in the Second World War to rescue us from the tyranny of the Nazis?

And yet — do we sufficiently realize that Christmas was just the beginning of the "rescue operation"? It was only (!) the first step on the *Via Dolorosa*, the long road of suffering which lay before Christ!

Is it too far-fetched to compare Jesus' rescue mission with that of the Allies in the Second World War to rescue us from the tyranny of the Nazis? For a number of years we yearned for the day when the Allies would set foot on the European continent. We were well aware that such a landing would be a prerequisite for winning the war. No wonder that, when the Allies finally landed in Normandy, excitement knew no bounds. We nearly went crazy with joy. A heavy burden fell off our shoulders. But this very risky landing was only the beginning! A long pad of suffering still lay ahead of us.

Secretly we listened with some tension to the forbidden radio reports from England. We rejoiced when the reports were good, but we cringed when they weren't. Nobody who experienced the winter of 1944-45 in Europe will ever forget the perpetual tension. On many walls the successes as well as the disappointments were marked on a map of the continent. Every night we spent much time in prayer, pleading with God to make the rescue operation successful, asking for strength and endurance to the end.

When at last, after a quiet front during the winter months of 1945, the Allies suddenly crossed the Rhine, our hopes rose to a new pitch, far above that of the Normandy landing. Looking back, that landing paled in significance compared with the progress the Allies made after Normandy. It paled because that landing was *only* the beginning. The final liberation would be the real thing!

A sad decline

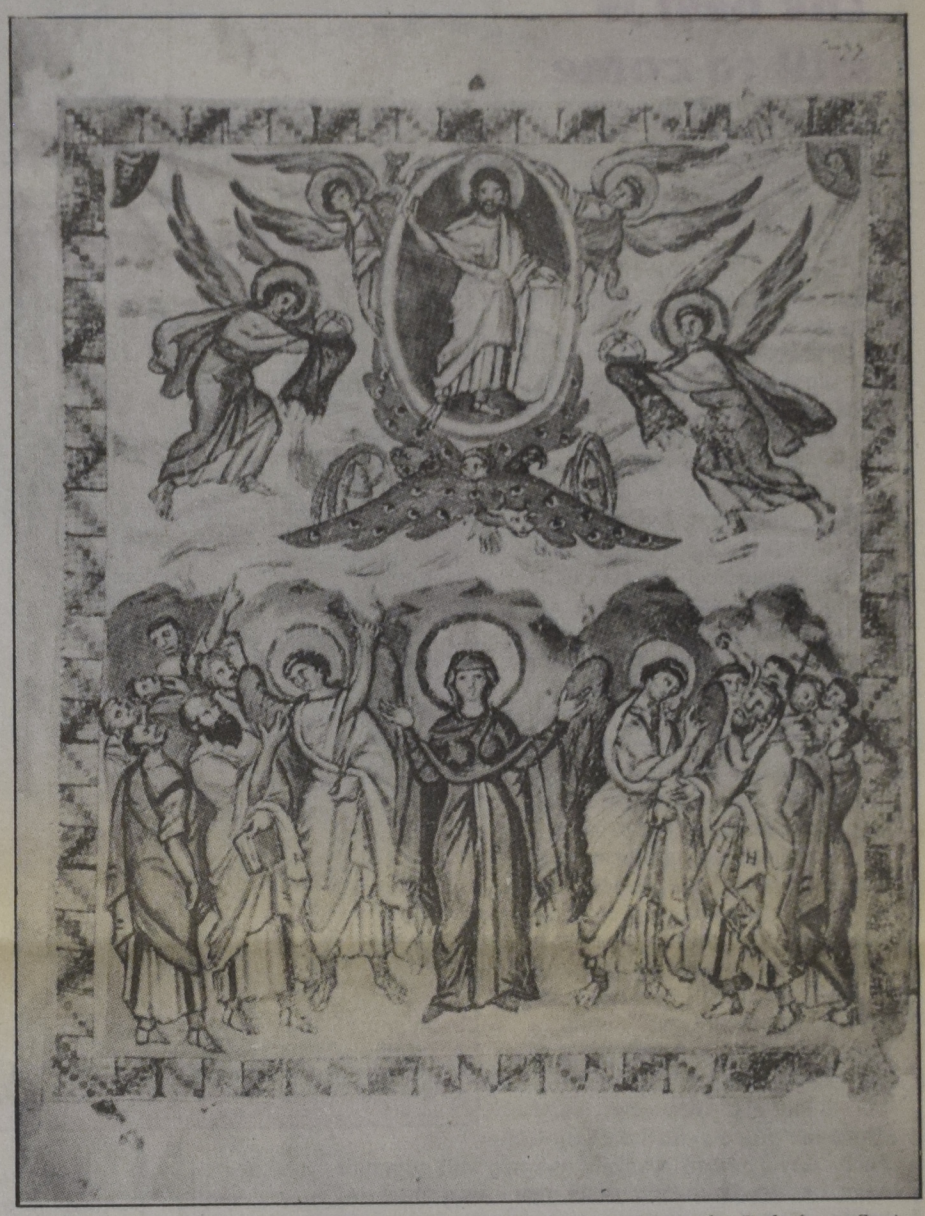
Although Christmas is the celebration of an event far greater than any landing in history by a military force, it can be of great value to look at the similarities between the two. During the war we followed the battles with the Nazis step by step and with utmost anticipation, until finally the battle was won and we were victoriously liberated.

I cannot help thinking along these lines when I consider our Christian celebrations. It seems no religious holiday is celebrated with the same intensity as Christmas. By the time we follow Christ in his suffering to the Garden of Gethsemane we have lost a great deal of our excitement. When Christ's suffering turns into victory at Easter, we do rejoice, yes, but our joy doesn't match our rejoicing at Christmas.

Victory!

For a full seven weeks Jesus shares with his church the reality of the victory over Satan and death, which culminated in Jesus' proclamation that he had been given all authority in heaven and earth. It marked the beginning of an entirely new era, with a mandate to the church never heard before: "Go out into all the world and make people citizens of my Kingdom." What a mandate! Far greater and bigger than any mandate before, and impossible to accomplish in human strength.

We are supposed to celebrate that fact on Ascension Day. But who still does that? Ascension Day seems to take us by surprise.



The Ascension *(about A.D. 586), a water color on parchment by Rabula, a Syrian priest (from the Laurentian Library, Florence, Italy).*

And when Pentecost arrives we don't know what to do with it. We don't even see the connection between it and Ascension Day.

Is it any wonder that we have lost sight of the significance of our creational mandate: to show to the world, as a community of Christ, how life should be lived in all its aspects, on the terms of Christ's Kingdom? Please, Lord, have mercy on us.

Syrt Wolters is a retired barber and former CC columnist who lives in Victoria, B.C.

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Advice

Are prenuptial agreements a no-no?

Dear P & M:

What is your opinion of prenuptial agreements? I am of a mind to insist on one if and when I marry.

Dear Prenuptial Agreement:

A prenuptial agreement is a legal covenant which determines what happens to each marriage partner's assets and finances in the case of a separation or divorce.

At first glance, this doesn't seem to be an option for Christians. Biblically, it seems to go against the understanding that marriage is for life and that husbands and wives possess each other's bodies (I Cor. 7:4) as well as other assets. Psychologically, it could indicate an inability to share and trust, whereas the success of a marriage depends on the ability to do both. Spiritually, the desire for such an agreement might suggest a lack of trust in God for the unknown future.

Having said all this, we can imagine some situations in which a prenuptial agreement makes sense and may even be necessary.

Consider the following. In some instances, two parties bring vastly unequal assets into a marriage. Perhaps one person has been single for a number of years and achieved financial success. Perhaps a person has been married before and, as a bereaved or divorced person, comes into the marriage with a number of family heirlooms important to the children or even the extended family.

Or perhaps a single parent comes into a marriage with assets meant for his or her children's college education. In all these scenarios a prenuptial agreement might well bring the secure knowledge that financial or material assets will be held or directed as pre-determined by both parties.

In other instances, the two parties bring vastly different emotional needs into a marriage. It may be that one partner has been physically, sexually or psychologically abused. One or both may have experienced the breakdown of their own parents' marriages, not to mention the divorces of their siblings or peers. With a history like this someone might enter marriage with legitimate fears based on real experiences. Such a person might understandably insist on being prepared in case things go wrong. While this makes us sad, we also recognize that these are real fears that haunt real people with real pain.

If one person insists on a prenuptial agreement because of unequal assets or a painful history, his or her partner should agree. The other party should not make it a divisive issue, even if he or she doesn't like the idea or see the need.

Do make sure that the reason for this insistence is understood. Sharing fears as well as hopes and dreams promotes understanding and intimacy. But if this is important to a future marriage partner, let the other party accept this condition as part of what the person needs in order to make a commitment. Don't proceed with the marriage, however, if this issue becomes a bone of contention which fosters resentment.

This discussion also emphasizes the importance of making a will. We are aware of a woman who was single for many years. She nursed her elderly parents until they passed away and consequently remained in the family home with its furnishings and family keepsakes. Late in life she married and then passed away. Unfortunately this woman did not make a will which could have directed certain emotion-laden knicknacks to her brothers and sisters. Today the husband and his older children from a previous marriage enjoy this home and all its contents. The woman's siblings have virtually nothing from their parental home.

Thank you for writing us about a matter that we have not previously considered in our column. In view of the fact that you do not seem to be engaged at this moment, we recognize that this is a largely theoretical question right now. We believe that it is a real dilemma for you. We also sense that many other young adults struggle with the same issue.

Please remember, however, that your abstract concerns may change or even dissipate when you meet the actual person with whom you want to make a life long commitment under God's blessing.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Happy sabbatical, Peter and Marja!

Peter and Marja Slofstra are away on a four-month sabbatical. They will be spending two months in Grand Rapids, Mich., and two months elsewhere. Marja, who is known at Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church for many leadership qualities and fundraising actions (among which is making pies), bids a temporary farewell with her sermon-making husband, Peter. In the meantime, please do continue to send in your "Dear Peter and Marja" letters, but address them to Bert Witvoet at the CC office. Mark your envelope "Personal" and he will guarantee confidentiality. The panel will continue to meet to answer letters for this column in the Slofstras' absence. **Editor**

For our Calendar of Events, please turn to page 15

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b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

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St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
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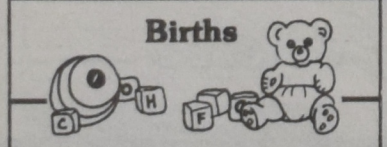
Births



VAN DER SLUIS (nee BERGSMA):
God has richly blessed Carl and Doreen with the birth of their little girl
BIANCA ANNA
She arrived at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital on Dec. 15, 1997, weighing 6 lbs., 10 oz.
Proud grandparents are George and Shirley Bergsma and Carl and Rieny Van der Sluis.

Thank You

We thank you for your continuing support, and wish all friends and acquaintances a blessed and healthy New Year 1998.
From the staff
at Paris Gospel Text
Paris, Ont.
Jennie Berg.

Anniversaries

Witmarsum — Hamilton
Fr., the Neth. — Ont.
1933 — 1998

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate with our parents
HENDRIK and CLARA HELDEN
(nee DE VRIES)
their 65th wedding anniversary on Jan. 25, 1998.
We thank them for their love and support and we pray for the Lord's continued blessings on them in the future.
Nick & Ann Helsdingen — St. Thomas
Ena & Wilfrid Damstra — London
Edward & Elizabeth Helden — Hamilton
nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.
Home address: 70 Mohawk Road West Hamilton, ON L9A 2G9.

Personal

Single white Chr. female seeking a male between 22 and 30. I enjoy listening to music, dancing, walking or just spending a quiet evening together. Hope to hear from you soon. Please send picture and letter to **File #2678, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.**

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Christian companion magazine.
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Write to:
#12 923 2nd Ave. S.
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Take action!
Place an ad in our
Business Directory.

Anniversaries

Rottevalle — Burlington
Fr., the Neth. — Ont.
1948 — February 5 — 1998

"Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain" (Ps.127:1a).

With happiness and by God's grace we look forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of our parents and grandparents
WIETZE (BILL) and
PIETJE (PAULINE)
KOOISTRA
(nee HELLINGWERF)
We share fond memories of a close and loving family. Our hope and prayer is that we may share many more years with you. May the Lord continue to bless you in your life together.
With love and congratulations, your children and grandchildren:
Andy & Alide Kooistra — Waterford
Victor & Theresa, Bonnie
Craig & Bonnie Kissack — Calgary
Kimberly, Griffin
Jack & Jane Jagt — Burlington
Jeremy & Susan, Rachel, Sarah
Phillip & Gerti Metzlar — Millgrove
Melissa, David, Michelle
Rick & Lydia Kooistra — Burlington
Jesse, Ryan, Aaron
Bill & Jane Kooistra — Burlington
Joel, Meghan, Adam
You are welcome to extend your congratulations to them at an open house to be held, D.V., on Saturday, Feb. 7, 1998, from 3 to 5 p.m., at Trinity Chr. School, 650 Walkers Line, Burlington, Ont.
Best wishes only, please.
Home address: 3495 New Street, Burlington, ON L7N 1N5

Real Estate

For Sale: Motel Niagara region. 22 units, 5 suites, 3 kitchenettes. Owners 4-bedroom home. Good income. $398,000.
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For Rent

Mobile home in Florida, Gulf Coast. Available from Jan. 1, 1998. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, central AC. **Call (905) 459-3913 or fax (905) 459-6135.**

Obituaries

July 9, 1919 - Dec. 10, 1997
TJIPKE (CHIP) JENINGA
was taken home by the Lord in his 79th year on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 1997.
He died in the confidence of the words of Psalm 25:1: "O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God. No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame."
Chip was the beloved husband of the late Nancy (nee DeJong).
Loving father and pake of:
Harry & Rita — St. Marys
Rodney, Shawn
Geraldine & Case Glasbergen — Whitby
Jason, Melanie, Jessica, Cassandra
Earl & Sonya — Linden, Alta.
Taylor
Linda & Garry Gordon — Baltimore
Valene, Bradley
Brother of Hank of Baltimore, and Andy of Manitoba and Akke Visser of the Netherlands.
Funeral service was held at the Grace Chr. Ref. Church, Cobourg, Ont., on Saturday, Dec. 13, 1997.
Correspondence address:
Harry and Rita Jeninga,
P.O. Box 71, St. Marys, ON
N4X 1A9

For Rent

Cottage for rent

in scenic **Holten** (Holland).
Contact: **Andy Borger**
(905) 623-6049.

Miscellaneous

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Job Opportunities

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Obituaries

What is your only comfort in life and in death? (Lord's Day 1).
Suddenly and peacefully, our mother, grandmother, great- and great-great-grandmother
JANTJE
VAN DER MEER-VAN DYK
went to be with her heavenly Father in the night of Dec. 18, 1997, at the age of 101 years.
She was predeceased by her husband Klaas Van der Meer in 1953, after a marriage of 36 years.
She was a widow for 44 years.
Also predeceased by her daughter Minke and her husband Eise Lodewyk of Red Deer, Alta., her son Sye Van der Meer of Delta, B.C., and her son-in-law Freerk Leystra of Rinsumageest, the Neth.
Our mother had recently moved from Rinsumageest in Friesland to Talma Woonoord in Veenwouden.
We thank the Lord that we could enjoy our mother for so long and in such good health.
Her children in Canada:
Jacob Van der Meer & Hilly Van der Meer-Alkema — Georgetown, Ont.
Yeke Van der Meer-Terpstra — Delta, B.C.
John Van der Meer & Hetty Van der Meer-Lenstra — Limehouse, Ont.
Betsy De Vries-Van der Meer & Berend De Vries — Kitchener, Ont.
Her children in the Netherlands:
Kees van der Meer & Anna van der Meer-de Vries — Rinsumageest, Fr.
Jantje Leystra-van der Meer — Rinsumageest, Fr.
Tienke van der Vis-van der Meer & Jan van der Vis — Texel, N.H.
and many, many grandchildren in three generations.
The funeral service took place in Rinsumageest, Fr., the Neth., on Dec. 22, 1997.
Correspondence address:
Mr. Jac Van der Meer, 401 Delrex Blvd., Georgetown, ON L7G 4H8

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Call accepted:
— to First CRC, Drayton, Ont., Rev. Gerrit Bomhof of Covenant CRC, Winnipeg, Man.

New address:
— Calvin CRC, 7 Gilbey Dr., Nepean, ON K2E 5S4

Interested in placing an ad.
Call us for details.

Classifieds

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Fax resume to 905-648-5314 or call 905-648-4113.

Teachers

LANGLEY, B.C.: Langley Chr. Schools. Our High School's expansion at Grade 12 and increased enrolment means **staffing positions** will be open for the 1998-99 school year. Applicants need to send a resume, statement of educational philosophy, and teaching evaluation reports. Eligibility for BC teaching certification is needed. Priority will be given to applicants with training in the following areas:

COMPUTER STUDIES:
be able to run a networked lab and oversee and develop programs from grade 6-12.
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Send applications to:
Peter Van Huizen, Principal
Langley Chr. High School
22702-48 Ave., Langley,
BC V2Z 2T6
Phone: (604) 533-0842
Fax: (604) 533-0842
E-mail: LCSMH@Axionet.com

NEWMARKET, Ont.: Holland Marsh District Chr. School, needs a teacher, due to a pregnancy leave, in the middle of May to teach **Grade 1** and possibly continuing in September and going to the end of November. Applicant needs strengths in music and be able to teach French. Join a dynamic team committed to being servants and teaching in Jesus' name. Contact:
Henry Lise, Principal
e-mail: hmdcs@interhop.net
or fax at (905) 775-2395
Mail to: HMDCS
18955 Dufferin St., R.R. #2
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4V9

Look for more Teacher Ads on page 14...

Job Opportunities

Calvin College Education Department

CALVIN College

The Calvin College Education Department seeks candidates for a tenure-track position (subject to approval) which primarily involves teaching and advising in the M. Ed. Curriculum and Instruction Program with some duties in the undergraduate teacher education program.

Qualifications include: 1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in curriculum and instruction; 2) K-12 teaching and/or administration experience; 3) a scholarship agenda; and 4) commitment to a Reformed Christian expression of faith.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is an equal opportunity employer. The College encourages the application of women and minority candidates. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and curriculum vitae to:
Dr. L. Stegink, Department Chair, Education Department, Calvin College, 3201 Burton, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546, by March 1, 1998, or until the position is filled.

Attention!

If you are considering sending us an ad via fax, please be sure to:
• send printed or typed copy
• include billing address
• include contact person with phonenumber
Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT

The Edmonton Society for Christian Education is taking a bold step into the future.

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Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of Christian Education **before Jan. 30, 1998**, to:

Al Schut, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
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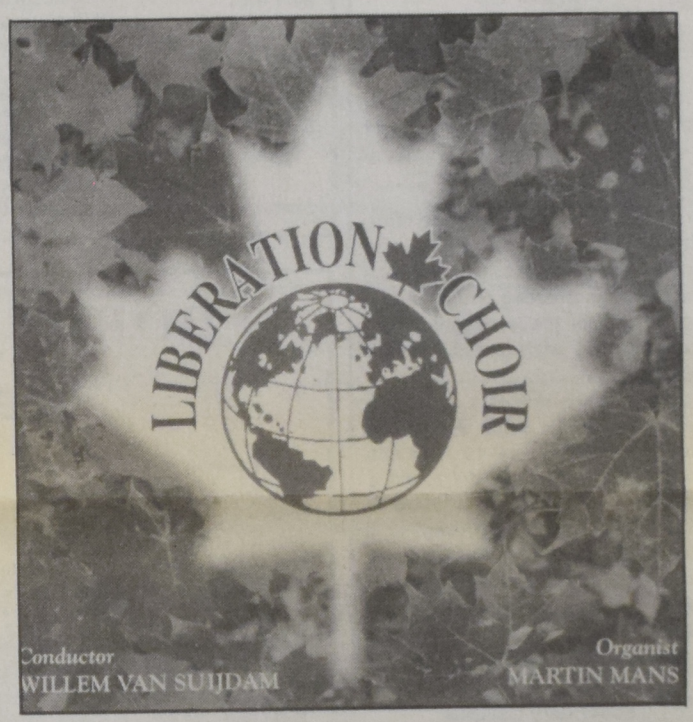

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Classifieds

Teachers

ORANGEVILLE, Ont.: Orangeville Chr. School invites applications to fill a definite part-time vacancy on its teaching staff due to a maternity leave starting March 1998. The successful applicant is required to teach in the Intermediate level/Resource program and will be a certified teacher with training and/or experience in Special Education. Please send a letter of application, a resume, and a Christian philosophy of education to:

Mr. George Hoytema
Orangeville Chr. School
P.O. Box 176
Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z6
(519) 941-3381

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Please mail resumes to:

Mr. John Bronsema, Principal
Bulkley Valley Chr. School
Secondary Campus
P.O. Box 3635
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0 or fax to
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Fax 416-979-2332
http://icscanada.edu

- Women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.
- Applicants should possess a PhD in this field and should subscribe to the Christian basis of the Institute.
- Responsibilities include teaching master's level courses and engaging in a program of academic research and publishing.
- Starting salary is approximately $40,000 + benefits.
- In accordance with Canadian immigration laws, this advertisement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Qualified candidates should send:
- a letter of application
- Curriculum Vitae
- names of three references

To: Dr. Hendrik Hart, Academic Dean
Deadline: February 28, 1998

DORDT COLLEGE

REGISTRAR

The position is vacant as the result of the tragic death of Douglas M. Eckhardt. Responsibilities include such areas as academic advising: planning, organizing, and managing a computer-based information system for student registration and records. Qualifications: Candidates with a graduate degree and experience in academia as faculty or administrator are preferred. Beginning date is flexible.

Review of candidates continues.

To receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest that provides evidence of that commitment and a ourriculum vitae to
Dr. Rockne McCarthy; Dordt College; 498 4th Ave. NE; Sioux Center, IA 51250; facsimile: 712-722-4496; e-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution and encourages the nominations and candidacies of women and minorities.

Ottawa Christian School
is seeking applications for the position of

PRINCIPAL

Our school is a non-denominational community of 180 students and 11 teachers, offering an educational program from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. The position of Principal includes both teaching and administrative responsibilities. Ottawa Christian School is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

Interested candidates are invited to submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae **before Feb. 15, 1998,** to:

Principal Search Committee
c/o Mr. L. Vandergrift
937 Alpine Ave., Ottawa, ON K2B 5R9
For further information, please call: (613)820-0272

Job Opportunities

DORDT COLLEGE

DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

The successful candidate for this new position will serve as a professional staff assistant to the President of the College. Responsibilities include analyzing educational, demographic, and social trends; developing initiatives in response to changes in the educational and social environment; monitoring campus diversity; co-ordinating studies for institutional accreditation. Qualifications: a graduate degree and experience as faculty in higher education or as administrator in higher or secondary education.

Review of candidates is continuing until position is filled.

To receive application materials and a job description, qualified persons committed to a Reformed biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a resume and a letter of interest which provides evidence of that commitment to
Office of the President; Dordt College; 498 4th Ave. NE; Sioux Center, IA 51250; facsimile: 712-722-1185 ;
e-mail: nancyvb@dordt.edu

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution and encourages the nominations and candidacies of women and minorities.

Miscellaneous

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Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Jan. 24 A celebration on the occasion of the retirement of Harry Antonides, former CLAC Director of Research and Education. At 7 p.m., Best Western Hotel (corner Shawson & Dixie Rd.) **Mississauga**, Ont. (close to CLAC's head office). Info.: (905) 670-7385 or fax (905) 670-8416 (#).

Jan. 25 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Ralph Koops, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Feb. 4 Annual "Church & The Law" seminar, for ministers, church leaders and Christian charities, providing practical information on current legal issues. From 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m., Queensway Cathedral, 1536 The Queensway, **Toronto** (Etobicoke), Ont. Held in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. Main speakers: Carl Juneau (Revenue Canada) and Father Francis G. Morrisey (Ottawa's St. Paul's University). Info.: Phone (519) 669-5137, Fax (519) 669-3291.

Feb. 7 Presentation of "The Ragamuffin Gospel," a musical journey of the heart, 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, 301 Scott St., **St. Catharines**, Ont., Info.: (905) 934-0631.

Feb. 25-28 The 1998 Stone Lectures, featuring Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff and presentations by five panels of scholars. Topic: "Religion, Pluralism, and the Public Life - Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the 21st Century." Sponsored by the Princeton Theological Seminary, the Centre for Public Justice, the Free University in Amsterdam and Calvin College. Info.: Phone (410) 571-6300, Fax (410) 571-6365, e-mail: inquiries@cpjustice.org

News

Michigan church helps with welfare reform

... continued from page 1

magazine and one initiator of the roundtable, Tony Campolo, and Stanley Carlson-Thies, a senior fellow of the Center for Public Justice, a Kuyperian think tank in Annapolis, Maryland. Carlson-Thies explains, "The spirit of 'charitable choice' is that faith-based organizations ought not to be kept out [of welfare reform] or required to secularize themselves."

The Center for Public Justice has published a *Guide to Charitable Choice*, which explains the provision to interested Christian groups. The centre explains that the provision requires government to respect the religious character of faith-based groups that agree to work with public welfare programs. It allows these groups to use a faith-based approach to assisting the needy and religious criteria in hiring, firing and disciplining employees, despite using federal funds. But the provision also protects the right of recipients to receive services without religious coercion.

JACK BOOTH

Counselling services provided at an inner-city shelter in Boston. The Christian Roundtable on Poverty and Welfare Reform wants more Christian groups to provide such services, in co-operation with government.

Government can't do it

Some Christian groups are already working with government in welfare reform, says Carlson-Thies. "A lot is going on, some of which started before the [welfare reform] bill was passed."He gives the example of Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., which is working effectively with the local county government to help people get off welfare. (One of Harderwyk's co-pastors is Wayne Brouwer, a longtime CC columnist.)

The church is working on a personal level with people on welfare, helping them in ways the government can't, says Carlson-Thies. "A lot of things the government can't do because it doesn't have the human resources."

Sherrie Kornoelje Santos is co-ordinator of Harderwyk's Neighbors Plus program. "Neighbors Plus was set up to be the diaconal arm of Harderwyk church," she explains. It consists of several projects, including a mentoring program, daycare, transitional housing and even a used-car ministry.

"Mentoring is probably our biggest project," says Santos. Currently, 18 mentors from the church are working with 14 families. In the past year, 30 families have been helped by mentors. The mentoring involves problem-solving, help with budgeting and finances, and discussing with families what their dreams are for the future. "We think of it as a partnership with that family," asserts Santos.

Mentors also help people on welfare find a job or keep the one they have. "We're fortunately in a high-growth area," says Santos, so there are many available jobs.

No one left on welfare

Church mentors also help welfare recipients by dealing with emergencies. For instance, a single parent might need to take a child to school but faces the possibility of being late for work and losing his or her job. Mentors can help such a person out by delivering the child to school, allowing the single parent to experience less stress at the workplace.

In addition to its Neighbors Plus program, Harderwyk church works as a partner with Good Samaritan Ministries, a local ecumenical group. Santos works half-time with Neighbors Plus and half-time with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Carol Fennelly, a spokesperson for Call to Renewal (a group which helped start the roundtable), is enthusiastic about Neighbors Plus, which she says is "hugely successful. There's no one left on welfare in Ottawa County.... I was so interested I spent a day in Ottawa County meeting with church people."

Fennelly is especially impressed with Harderwyk church's loan fund, which helps low-income people pay off credit card bills, car loans or other expenses. So far, there's been an 85 per cent repayment rate, she says.

There has been no response yet from governors to the roundtable's letter, says Fennelly. But she notes that the letter was sent in late December. Holiday away time and slow Christmas mail may have prevented an early response. The roundtable will soon be following up by calling each governor, she adds.

Sharing challenges

Carlson-Thies notes that the governor of Texas has already taken a strong interest in the charitable choice provision, and says his centre and the roundtable share a strong interest in welfare reform. "I'm very delighted to work with them."

Carlson-Thies was impressed with the wide variety of Christian groups that signed the roundtable's letter and supports its welfare reform initiative. "We're all confronted with the same challenge," he observes.

The Christian roundtable was first convened last spring by Call to Renewal, part of the Sojourners organization, a socially-conscious evangelical group based in Washington, D.C.. It took part in last April's President's Conference on Volunteerism in Philadelphia.

Jim Wallis, who was instrumental in setting up the roundtable, observes that churches have been involved for years with welfare. "Churches are at the heart of social service and action.... The separation of church and state is foundational to American democracy. But that essential doctrine must not be used to deprive Americans of the full contribution of the religious community to the current crisis of poverty and welfare reform."

Canada's immigration levels up

OTTAWA (Canadian Scene) — According to Statistics Canada, recent data from the 1996 census show that Canada was home to five million immigrants in 1996, a 14.5 per cent increase since 1991. Immigrants represented 17.4 per cent of the population, the largest share in more than 50 years.

And for the first time this century, European-born immigrants accounted for less than half of the the total immigrant population. The immediate media reaction to the announcement was to emphasize the fact that socalled "visible minorities" now outnumber white-skinned immigrants.

The news was sure to anger a number of elements in society from those who openly profess their racism to those who admit to their prejudices only behind closed doors. The usual arguments were brought forward: "They take jobs away from native-born Canadians." "They're importing alien cultures."

Because of Canada's low birth-rate, it must have large-scale immigration merely to maintain current population levels. The majority of immigrants obtain Canadian citizenship within three to four years after immigration. Of all immigrants to become citizens, 83 per cent had done so by 1996.

The Immigration Plan for 1998 sets 200,000 to 225,000 as the overall range of immigrants and refugees, 5,000 higher than the levels announced in the plan for 1997.

The 1998 number includes 175,900 to 192,700 immigrants and 24,100 to 32,200 refugees. Within the immigrant category, 115,900 to 127,900 are in the economic class (including their dependents) and 53,500 to 58,300 are in the family class.

News Digest

She's an angel

MONTREAL — Thirteen-month-old Julia Carignan has been given the right to keep her second name, C'est-un-ange (It's an angel), reports the *Globe and Mail.*

Quebec's civil law director, Guy Lavigne, had refused to register the name on the grounds it could bring ridicule on Julia. But the Quebec Superior Court recently backed parents Lise Villeneuve and Roland-Yves Carignan, stating that the name isn't pejorative and nothing in the Quebec Civil Code bars using it. The code does bar names that are gross or absurd.

Long-lost poem discovered

COPENHAGEN — Recently, a third-grader in Copenhagen, working on a class project about the beloved fairy tale author Hans Christian Andersen, told her father about the assignment. That triggered a memory. He went to a long-forgotten file and pulled out a hand-written original poem entitled "To Frederik's Mother" that Andersen had sent to the girl's great-grandmother in 1836. The find, which is to be published for the first time as part of the school project, is being called "rare, genuine and exciting" by literary experts, says the *Christian Science Monitor.*

Is "D'oh!" a word?

CLEVELAND — Homer Simpson's anguished expression "D'oh!" may soon become part of Webster's New World Dictionary. Michael Agnes, Webster's editor-in-chief, says it's under consideration. In fact, there's a "d'oh" file in his Cleveland office, reports the *Toronto Star.*

The expression originated in 1987, when Matt Groening created *The Simpsons* TV series. Groening would write "frustrated grunt" into the script when Homer Simpson reacted with chagrin to a humiliating or anguished situation. Dan Castellaneta, the voice of Homer, came up with the expression. He explains, "It means, 'Oh no! I just ... realized my stupidity!' It's a realization of irony."